

JOINT COUNCIL/HARB MEETING
May 30, 2013

Council Members Present: Douglas Baker, Mayor
Donna Fletcher, Deputy Mayor
Samuel Lyons
Jennifer M Horne

Council Members Excused: James Marshall
Ryan Rudegear
Garnet Wood

HARB Members Present: James Ashbaugh
Matt Beith
Chuck Gibbons
Dianne Hall
Daniel Weiland

HARB Members Excused: Jack Crawford
Dale Wilson

In Attendance: E. William Gabrys, City Manager
Tracy Jamieson, Deputy Manager
Brian Spaid, Esq., City Solicitor
Darla Hawke, Recording Secretary
Bill Callahan, State Bureau of Historic Preservation
Rachael Ashbaugh
Sandy Baker
Jeremy Johnson, Venango Newspapers, Inc.

The meeting was called to order at 2:15 PM.

Mrs. Hall introduced Mr. Callahan, of the State Bureau of Historic Preservation, and explained that he had been invited to discuss how best to establish guidelines to protect the City's Historic District.

Mr. Callahan advised, it was imperative for the Historic & Architectural Review Board [HARB] members to establish guidelines, with Council's approval, so that property and business owners seeking new development have a full understanding of the City's "mission, vision and reasoning." Mr. Callahan advised, the City's biggest assets could be broken down into two categories: aesthetics and the residents themselves, who want to protect said aesthetics. He noted, the City's location on the rivers, the architecture and the history is a "goldmine." He advised that historic preservation is a matter of changing old mindsets and that leaders in

Franklin should embrace the historical culture of the City in the same way they would embrace industrial development. Asking someone, who plans to invest in this community, to be sensitive to the City's Historic asset is simply guiding progress in a way that ensures the long-term economic success of the community. The HARB Board should serve as a resource to the Council and to the property owners. Mr. Callahan did remark that a purist's view of historic preservation, without some flexibility, would not be successful, just as the complete opposite would also not end well.

Mr. Callahan advised it was also important the City develop an Historic Preservation Plan for the whole community, which would include a new survey of buildings within and, if possible, outside of the district as well, to be used as a reference by both HARB and other historic groups. The Plan should be simple and straightforward, listing time frames and goals; i.e. a guide depicting where Franklin wants to go and what it wants for the future. The historic character of Franklin is a great asset.

It was noted that the City's Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 1990 and a lot has changed since then. However, Mr. Callahan felt the first thing to do would be to finish the guidelines and to look at how the City wants to do the Historic Preservation Plan.

Mrs. Jamieson felt a balance between not turning away progress and adhering to Historic guidelines needed to be found. Mr. Callahan advised, progress & preservation do not have to be separate. Progress needs to be defined on how you manage that asset. When you combine the people and how the town looks, being sensitive to this project will not deter business. Mr. Weiland added, we need to keep in mind it is an Historic District and, for example, when replacing windows, realizing there are a variety of choices rather than white vinyl.

In regard to the financial aspect, Mr. Callahan advised that his office administers programs and also suggested applying for the Certified Local Government Program, a federal program under the National Historic Preservation Act, that could make Franklin eligible for grant funding to be used for historic preservation projects within the City. (The next grant cycle would be in March of next year.) He also suggested Franklin look at local funding and grant assistance through the Oil Region Alliance. Any funder, he noted, will want to know what you are going to spend their money on and how it fits into a larger development plan. He also stressed the importance of the City being listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Mr. Callahan felt Franklin's Ordinance is good in regard to the historic district; noting though, it does not provide a lot of guidance. He cautioned against including guidelines as part of the ordinance as it could create difficulties down the road should changes need to be made.

He made the following suggestions for HARB members:

- Continue to work on developing guidelines, using resources from Federal Historic Guidelines and guidelines from communities similar to Franklin (listing Blairsville, PA; Scotdale, PA; Cape May, NJ and Red Cloud, NE, among others)
 - Guidelines should be illustrative and instructional
- Offer open houses to garner public opinion and to educate the public on why Historic Preservation is important to the long-term vision of our community and to give them a chance to provide feedback
 - Invite contractors to review a copy
- Put information on the City's website and Facebook page that refers the public to the guidelines
- Create a communicating body to work with the public and to serve as a resource to both the Council and to the property owners.

Mrs. Hall reported that HARB is presently working on sign & awning guidelines and hopes to have a draft ready for the July Council Meeting. Their hope is that City Council will adopt the guidelines incrementally as they are written, as opposed to waiting for a complete package. Mr. Weiland reiterated the need to educate the community to promote preservation as a positive thing.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Darla Hawke, Recording Secretary